

THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN®

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a **NEW** Henry H. Turnbuckle story by

JACK RITCHIE

Do you like stories about multiple murders? Do you relish looking for the pattern, the common denominator, the connecting link? Who among us—fan, devotee, aficionado—doesn't enjoy this 'tec theme? Well, here is one of the wackiest, one of the weirdest, one of the most fantastic series of murders you've ever encountered in mystery fiction, investigated by our old friend Detective Sergeant Henry H. Turnbuckle and his sidekick Ralph . . .

THE CONNECTING LINK

by **JACK RITCHIE**

I rubbed my hands. "I do so enjoy a good chain of murders."
"For shame, Henry."

"Now, Ralph, I didn't mean it that way. I have as much reverence for life as the most dedicated vegetarian. I meant that I enjoy the problem, the puzzle, the *challenge* presented by a connected series of murders."

There had been five of them so far and twelve teams of detectives were working on the case. Ralph and I now became the thirteenth. It was evident to me that the captain had been holding us in reserve, confident that if all others failed he could count on us.

Captain Williams now let us see the first letter.

Dear Sirs:

If you will send someone to 3186 N. Hopkins, apartment 26, you will find the body of one Alfred Cervantes. Last night, at approximately ten P.M., I shot him.

During the course of nineteen days, I intend to murder five more people.

10/19/1

© 1981 by Jack Ritchie.

"What is that 10/19/1 supposed to mean?" Ralph asked.

Captain Williams did not know. "We haven't been able to figure it out so far, but it's on every note."

Again Ralph pondered. "Why *nineteen* days? Why not ten or twenty or something even. Why nineteen?"

"It is the glove in our faces," I said grimly. "Meant to taunt us. And so is 10/19/1."

A squad car had been sent to the named address and the body of Alfred Cervantes, 36, had been discovered on the floor of his apartment.

Alfred Cervantes, a stone mason, had been a bachelor living alone. He had no known enemies.

The captain handed us the second note. It had been received three days after the first.

Dear Sirs:

You will find the body of Winfield Jackson in his apartment at 406 Mulberry. I shot him yesterday evening at eight o'clock.

Yes, I have decided to kill a total of six people. In a larger community I might have been able to make that as many as ten, but here I must limit myself to six.

I do not personally know any of my victims. I have no motive for killing any one of them—at least none that you could understand.

10/19/1

"Captain," I said significantly. "Just because he says that he has no standard motive is no reason why we must believe him. He could very well be hiding some perfectly legitimate motive for killing at least one or more of his victims and simply covering up by the use of multiplicity."

Captain Williams agreed. "We thought of that, Henry. In depth. But we still don't have anything."

Winfield Jackson, 52, a barber, had been a widower living alone. Investigation had not turned up anyone who might have wished him dead.

We read the third note.

Dear Sirs:

You will find Jerome Livingston dead in his apartment at 1908 East Wimberly. Apartment 47. I shot him at approximately nine thirty last evening.

I have told you that I do not know any of my victims

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personally and that is quite true. I have done only enough research to know that they will be available when I come to call.

I realize that simply murdering people without any motive and apparently helter-skelter is rather unfair in this game. Therefore I now tell you that if there is no motive, at least there is a *pattern*—a definite pattern and I defy you to find it.

10/19/1

Ralph shook his head. "So he thinks this is all a game."

Jerome Livingston, 32, had been a bachelor and a chiropractor. Nothing significant tying him to the first two murders had been discovered.

The fourth letter came two days later.

Dear Sirs:

You will find Richard Newman dead in his apartment at 2981 Greenfield. Number 97. I shot him at about nine last evening.

My method of murder is simple and straightforward. I simply press the buzzer at my victim's door. When he answers, I shoot him. I have a silencer on my gun.

10/19/1

Richard Newman, 36, a grade-school teacher, had been separated from his wife and living alone.

Captain Williams picked up the fifth note. "This one came this morning."

"Ah, ha," I said, reaching. "Undoubtedly the fifth victim was single, a widower, or divorced, but certainly living alone in an apartment."

"No, Henry." Captain Williams handed me the note.

Dear Sirs:

I do not, of course, need to tell you where to find the body of my fifth victim. You already know.

How is the game going? Are you closing in or are you still blundering about? Have you done your research?

10/19/1

The fifth corpse had been that of George Rubens. He was married, had two grown children away from home, and lived in the lower half of a duplex which he owned. He was 62 at the time of his death and had been a lawyer.

Last night at about ten his front door buzzer had sounded and

Rubens had gone to answer it. The killer had shot him as he opened the door. By the time Rubens' wife reached her husband's body, the killer had already fled into the night. She had phoned the police immediately.

Captain Williams leaned back in his chair. "Well, what do you make of it so far?"

Ralph thought he had something. "They were murdered in alphabetical order."

I considered that. "Even if that is so, Ralph, he's skipped quite a few letters. Besides, I don't believe that chain murderers resort to the alphabetical system any more." I turned to the captain and chided mildly. "Sir, you should have called us in sooner."

He stared at the ceiling. "I was saving you, Henry."

Just as I had thought. "I shall not fail you, Captain. Let me draw you a picture of our murderer. He is single, a widower, or divorced. My bet is single. He lives alone, though possibly with an aging parent or parents. If only one, it is probably his mother, since mothers as a rule live longer than fathers.

"I would say that he is fairly well educated, simply from the tone of his letters. I suspect that he has not done particularly well at his job, whatever that job is. He has probably not received the promotions he thinks he deserves. These murders are twisted protests against the circumstances of his life and a bid for recognition. He wants to show the world—and very likely prove to himself—that he has the stuff of which superior minds are made.

"I also suspect that he is in his fifties. He has reached that point in his life when he feels he must *do* something to even things up. When one is younger than fifty, one still harbors hope that things will change for the better. If one is sixty or older, one has already given up and cannot spare the energy required for violent protest."

Captain Williams seemed impressed. "Well, get to work on it, Henry. Tomorrow is the nineteenth day and victim number six is due."

He left Ralph and me with the detailed reports compiled by the other twelve teams working on the case, and we began to read.

When one searches for a connecting link in a series of murders, one cannot afford to overlook even minor items.

I thought I had something going when I discovered that the first four victims had seen military service. But then the fifth had not. Four of them had brown hair. But one had none at all. Four of them

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were Democrats. One was not. It went like that, with the role of the exception transferring from one victim to another.

By the time our shift ended at five, my head was reeling with facts, figures, and exceptions. The only consistency seemed to be that all the victims were males, all had telephones, and all were killed between the hours of eight and ten in the evening.

I went back to my apartment, made and ate my supper, and then sat down in my easy chair.

I proceeded to cogitate. Cervantes, Jackson, Livingston, Newman, Rubens. What could they all have had in common?

Well-known surnames for one thing. I rubbed my jaw. Was that possibly the key to the puzzle? Was our murderer disposing of people simply because they shared the same surnames with individuals who had made their mark in the world? Fantastic, but when one is dealing with a mad killer, one cannot afford to overlook the fantastic.

Or suppose, just *suppose*, that the present-day victims really had *nothing* in common themselves—*except* that they all shared the surnames of relatively famous individuals? Was it these exceptions and dead people who were actually linked together somehow?

What in the world could a mixed bag like that have in common? Cervantes, Jackson, Livingston, Newman, Rubens. They were not even contemporaries. Perhaps that could bear a little research.

I went to my set of the new Encyclopedia Britannica, the first ten volumes of which were for ready reference, the next nineteen for knowledge in depth, and the last single volume an outline of knowledge.

Ten, nineteen, one.

I blinked. *10/19/1?*

My eyes quickly went to the nineteen-volume section. Where would I find Cervantes? Ah, yes. Volume 3, which covered Bolivia to *Cervantes*. Cervantes' name was right there on the spine of the book.

Volume 10 caught my eyes. *Jackson* to Livestock. Also on the spine.

Volume 11. *Livingston* to Metalwork. On the spine again.

Newman? Yes. Volume 13. *Newman* to Peisistratus.

And Rubens? Volume 16. *Rubens* to Somalia.

My heart began to pound. The name of each of the five victims appeared on the spine of an encyclopedia volume. In plain sight.

An incredible coincidence? One name, yes. Perhaps even two. But *all five?* No. Never.

So that was it.

Our murderer had selected the names of his victims from the backs of his encyclopedia set. And he had killed them in alphabetical order. Ralph had been right about that.

But there were *other* surnames on the backs of the encyclopedia set. I made a list of them. Aalto, a Finnish architect. Bolivar, the South American Liberator. Congreve, the dramatist. Hume, the philosopher. Peisistratus, the Greek ruler and tyrant. Why had our murderer skipped these names?

I reached for my telephone book and began paging. There was no Aalto listed. No Bolivar. No Congreve. The killer's words came to my mind. *I have decided to kill a total of six people. In a larger community I might have been able to make that as many as ten, but here I must limit myself to six.* They had been passed over for the very logical reason that they did not exist in our area.

I found a Hume listed. Only one. D. Hume. Why had he skipped Hume? Ah. Quite often women will list only their first initial or initials in the phone book to forestall nuisance or obscene calls. D. Hume was a Dorothy or a Doris or a Debbie and our murderer did not want to deviate from his basic pattern by killing a woman.

I could find no Peisistratus, which did not surprise me. I doubted if any larger community could provide one, except possibly Athens.

And where did all this bring me? To Volume 18. *Taylor* to Utah. Taylor was the next victim, unless—

Volume 19. Utilitarianism to Zwingli. What was Zwingli?—a tribe, a language, a person? I checked. A Swiss Protestant reformer.

I returned to the phone book. No Zwingli.

That settled it. *Taylor* was to be the sixth victim.

I immediately phoned Ralph and then Captain Williams. All three of us met twenty minutes later at headquarters, where I explained to them what I had so relentlessly deduced.

When I finished, they went off to consult the backs of a set of the Encyclopedia Britannica, which they eventually found in the sixth-floor jail library. While I waited for them to return, I did some more research in the telephone book.

When they came back, the captain reached for the phone book. He turned to the Taylors and estimated. "There are at least five hundred Taylors in the book."

"Five hundred and twenty-three," I said happily. "You could be living next to a Taylor and never know it."

"Whatever. The point is that we can't cover five hundred and

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twenty-three Taylors. The best we can do is to get in touch and tell them not to answer their doorbells tomorrow night."

"Captain," I offered. "The task of covering the Taylors can be considerably simplified if we just heed the murderer's pattern. Our Taylor will be single, or a widower, or separated from his wife, but in any case living alone in an apartment."

Ralph stirred. "Henry, the first four victims may have been men living alone in apartments, but the fifth, Rubens, was married and lived in a duplex."

Naturally I had the answer. "Ralph, there are only *three* Rubenses listed in our telephone book and two of those are women. The killer simply had to take what he could get and stay as close to his pattern as possible. In this case he sacrificed the residential requirement, but adhered to the gender. As it was, he was lucky that his first victim, Cervantes—of whom there are only four in this city—happened to be single and living in an apartment. Or perhaps that was what created the pattern in the first place."

I allowed myself a smile. "However, I do not think he is faced with any such problem as far as the Taylors are concerned. There are five hundred and twenty-three of them from whom to choose and I am certain that a fair number will be men living alone in apartments."

Captain Williams set the machinery in motion and by the time Ralph and I reported in for our shift the next morning there was a list.

"We narrowed it down to forty-two Taylors," Captain Williams said. "That still means calling in a lot of people to work overtime tonight, but let's hope it's for only one night."

He took a piece of paper out of a folder. "There's one other thing. We got another note from the killer."

I frowned. "You mean he's already killed his sixth man?"

"No, Henry. Not yet."

I read.

Dear Sirs:

Tonight I will dispose of my sixth and final victim.

Have you discovered the link between my victims? To do so does not require encyclopedic knowledge. A surface glance is quite sufficient.

10/19/1

Captain Williams assigned Ralph and me to guard a Frederick C. Taylor. We arranged with him, for the sake of his safety, to spend the night with one of his relatives, and at six that evening Ralph

and I let ourselves into his vacant apartment with the key he had provided and sat down to wait.

The time passed slowly, as it always does on stakeouts, and something nagged at my brain. That last note from the murderer. As far as my deductive powers were concerned, I had not needed it. It was merely a confirmation. I had got to the nitty-gritty of the case without its help.

The killer hadn't known that, of course. So he had sent the sixth note to the department and this time *before* he intended to commit the murder. Was he just being daring? Foolhardy? Or was it possible that he had *intentionally* given away enough information so that, even if I were not there, at least *someone* in the department would have been bound to figure out the encyclopedia connection and act accordingly?

And then I had it. But of course. The last trick up our murderer's sleeve.

I consulted my watch. Eight o'clock. Perhaps there was still time.

Ralph watched me pick up the apartment phone and dial headquarters. "Ralph," I explained, "while we are scattered about the city guarding a host of Taylors, our murderer is going about with a dirty smile on his face and stalking his sixth victim, who is in reality Zwingli."

"I thought you said there is no Zwingli."

"I found no Zwingli in the *telephone* book, Ralph, and the reason is obvious. Zwingli has an *unlisted* number known only to a few friends and somehow discovered by our murderer. However, Zwingli *should* be listed in our city directory."

Someone on the other end of the line finally picked up the phone. I identified myself and directed him to get a copy of the city directory and look up Zwingli's address. He put me on hold and returned a long ten minutes later. "There's no Zwingli listed."

I was a bit deflated and slowly cradled the phone. "No Zwingli, Ralph."

He nodded sympathetically. "There are days like that."

Nine o'clock came and went. So did ten. Ralph and I had been directed to remain in the apartment until at least midnight.

At eleven our phone rang.

It was Captain Williams. "Well, Henry, we got our murderer. Brophy and Atwell made the arrest. They were staked out in a utility closet where they could watch the door of Elmer Z. Taylor's apartment. Number 21. Just after ten o'clock they saw our man

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coming up the stairs with a gun in his hand and a dirty smile on his face. They waited until he pressed the buzzer before they jumped out and covered him. When he saw their guns he melted, and surrendered without a fight. He was so stunned to see them that he even confessed."

I smiled. "Ah, yes. Caught in the very act. Gun in hand and pressing the buzzer to Number 21."

"Not exactly, Henry."

"Not exactly?"

"No, Henry, he pressed the buzzer to apartment 27, down the hall."

I frowned. "He had the wrong apartment?"

"No, Henry. He had the right apartment. The victim he had in mind just wasn't named Taylor."

And then I had it. Again, but this time on target. But of course. Zwingli was not listed in either the directory *or* the telephone book for the very good reason that he was *new* to our metropolitan area. He hadn't been in the city long enough to be listed in either one of them.

I chuckled. "Captain, I'll wager a year's pay that I know the name of his intended victim. Zwingli, wasn't it?"

"No, Henry."

"No?"

"Utah. The man's last name is Utah."

The spine of Volume 18 flashed before my eyes. Taylor-*Utah*. But—

"John White Cloud Utah," Captain Williams said. "He's a Ute Indian who came east looking for work and he's now an apprentice brewmaster. There's one more thing, Henry."

There couldn't be. "What?"

"The murderer's name. It's Hume. David Hume."

Volume 8. Geraniales-*Hume*. How brazen could a killer get?

"He's 53, single, and living with his mother. He really doesn't have any personal motives for the murders. For now let's just say that the loser's life finally got to him and something snapped."

The captain continued mercilessly. "Of course Hume knew that his own surname was on the back of that encyclopedia, but it wasn't until he ran across John White Cloud Utah's name that he got the idea for his chain murders and the surprise ending. Hume is a clerk in the payroll department in the same brewery where Utah is taking his training."

The captain was in an irritatingly good mood. "Like you said, Henry, you could be living next door to a Taylor—or nearly so—and never know it. Hume didn't know that Utah lived on his floor. Neither did Utah know that Hume lived down the hall. Yes, sir, Henry, we couldn't have caught our man without your help. You put us in the neighborhood. Now about that bet you just made—"

I hung up.

Ralph waited. He had been a party to only one side of the conversation and now I would have to fill him in. How could I possibly do it?

He studied me and then cleared his throat. "Let's go out and have a drink first, Henry."

I had two stiff sherrys before I could bring myself to tell him the whole story.



DETECTIVERSE

FAKING IT

by MARGUERITE BURANELLI

A self-proclaimed expert named Ray
Bought a fine "marble" statue one day.
But, oh, was he humbled
When his idol it crumbled.
'Twas only a cheap feat of clay.

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